

**‘Are you local’?¹ The ‘indigenous’ Iron Age and a mobile Roman population
Paper for *Britannia***

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Abstract

The Iron Age and Roman periods are often defined against each other through the establishment of dualities, such as barbarity–civilisation, or continuity–progress. Despite criticisms, dualities remain prevalent in the National Curriculum for schools, television, museum displays and in some academic research. Recent scientific studies on human origins, for example, have communicated the idea of an ‘indigenous’ Iron Age, setting this against a mobile and diverse Roman-period population. There is also evidence for citizens leveraging dualities to uphold different positions on contemporary issues of mobility, in the UK and internationally. This paper discusses the values and limitations of such binary thinking and considers how ideas of ambiguity and temporal distancing can serve to challenge attempts to use the past too directly as an analogy for the present.

Keywords: Celtic, heritage, indigenous, Iron Age, dualities, mobility, Roman Britain

¹ Dyson, Gattis, Pemberton and Shearsmith (1999).

Introduction²

There is a considerable body of literature on the history of the study of the Iron Age and the reception of Roman models during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries,³ even though assessments of how these periods are drawn upon today are relatively rare.⁴ The same is also true for post-Roman and Early Medieval times, an issue that relates to a general dearth of analysis of public perception and experience of the past via the application of social research methods and frameworks.⁵ This article discusses the value and limitations of the concept of ‘insistent dualities’ in researching the Iron Age and Roman periods in the British Isles as well as the actors and dynamics that account for their rehashing.⁶

The idea of insistent dualities partly derives from the classical literature that addressed the gradual incorporation of ‘barbarian’ peoples across the north-west of Europe into the Roman Empire.⁷ However, despite heavy critique of the continued use of dualities in Roman archaeology since 1990,⁸ such oppositions persist and are employed to emphasise the progress and power gained from the adoption of Roman ways and innovations brought to Britain following the Roman conquest. Here, we explore the currency of these dualities through a swift assessment of a number of themes that appear to us to characterise the Iron Age and Roman worlds in school education and popular media – TV and museum displays (Table 1).

A startling example of insistent dualities is the contrast between an ‘indigenous’ Iron Age and mobile Romans. Since the 1980s there has been increasing concern in the World Archaeology movement to afford rights to indigenous groups in formerly colonised areas of

² This pilot paper derives from the new project ‘Iron Age and Roman Heritages’ (see Acknowledgments). Although focused on the UK, this research also aims to develop a broader international network of European scholars working in this field.

³ For the Iron Age, Celts and Druids: Morse 2005; Stout 2008 and Hingley 2011. For Rome: Vance 1997; Hingley 2000; Hingley 2008; Bradley ed. 2010; Goldhill 2011; Beard 2013.

⁴ Relevant works include: Reynolds 1979; Bowman 1998; Mytum 1999; Clarke and Hunter 2001; Appleby 2005; Ballard 2007; Tolia-Kelly 2010; Sillitoe 2013 and additional sources referenced below.

⁵ Bonacchi 2014; Hingley 2015b.

⁶ Beard and Henderson 1999, 47 outline the idea of insistent dualities built upon in this article.

⁷ Hingley 2008; Hingley 2016.

⁸ For instance, see critiques of the idea of progress from barbarism to civilisation inherent in approaches to Romanisation by Hingley 2000, 148–9; Webster 2001 and Mattingly 2006, 14–7. For a review, see Gardner 2013, 4–6.

the world.⁹ As researchers we need to be critically-aware of the potentially divisive use of the term 'indigenous' in the context of the European past.¹⁰ Claims to 'indigenous' origins have often been defined in opposition to the idea of migrants in narratives that seek to back the primacy of people who claim descent from the first settlers.¹¹ At the same time, the concept of 'mobility' is increasingly being adopted in Roman studies to reflect of the large-scale movement of people and objects across the Roman Empire.¹² Research in Roman archaeology has recently focused on assessing the extent to which people migrated into Britain during the period of Roman control.¹³ While the term 'migration' is used to identify the movement of people across physical space,¹⁴ 'mobility' is far broader and 'encompasses both large-scale movement of people, objects, capital and information across the contemporary world, and more local processes of daily transportation, movement through public space and the travel of material things within everyday life'.¹⁵

The growing use of the concept of 'mobility' in discussions of the Roman world prompts questions about how the past is being recreated and how these accounts reflect upon the present.¹⁶ For instance, how do they relate to the fact that the idea of indigenous groups across Western Europe has been politically misused to claim exclusive rights to territories and resources and to exclude, marginalise or eradicate 'others'?¹⁷ In the final

⁹ For a review see Hayes 2015, 61. **For concerns about the post-colonial nation state and resurgent nationalism see Fisher Onar et al. (2014).**

¹⁰ For the use of the term 'indigenous' in the search for an Iron Age genome, see Schiffels et al. 2016, 2, 3 4, 7; Martiniano et al. 2016, 6. The terms 'indigenous' and 'native' have also been widely used in archaeological accounts of Roman Britain, although this may now need to be reassessed. **This term may often have been adopted to avoid the use of the concept of the 'native' as a result of the associations of this term with colonial contexts, but 'indigenous' now seems just as problematic.**

¹¹ Holtorf 2009, 672; Hayes 2015, 61.

¹² e.g. Foubert and Breeze 2014; Versluys 2014; Eckardt and Müldner 2016 and de Ligt and Tacoma eds. 2016.

¹³ Including: Eckardt ed. 2010; Eckardt and Müldner 2016; Eckardt et al. 2014; Redfern et al. 2016; Shaw et al. 2016.

¹⁴ Jansen et al. 2015. For a discussion of Roman-period migration, see de Ligt and Tacoma 2016, 5–8.

¹⁵ Hannam et al. 2006, 1. See Leary 2014 for an archaeological reflection on the mobilities paradigm.

¹⁶ cf. Hingley 2015a. See the comment of Eckardt and Müldner 2016, 215 on studies of Roman-period migration and their communication. The communication of the idea of indigenous Britons may be no less problematic.

¹⁷ For the use of concepts of Germanic identity for divisive purposes, see Wilson 2013. In certain contexts the concept of Celtic identity is used in a comparable fashion, see Dietler 2006.

section of this article we ‘sense’ the use of dualities in online public discussions about Brexit, the exit of Great Britain from the European Union on which UK citizens were called to cast a vote on 23 June 2016.

Insistent dualities and education in England: Roman Britain as a ‘good thing’

In their study of museum displays of the Romans in Britain, Beard and Henderson define what they term the ‘insistent duality’ of Boudica/Boadicea, using this concept to reveal tensions in the ways that the Roman intervention and assimilation of ancient Britain is perceived.¹⁸ They ask:

Is Roman Britain Roman or native? British or foreign? Part of the seamless web of ‘our island story’, or an ignominious period of enemy occupation? The origins of (European) ‘civilization’ on our shores, or an unpleasant, artificial intrusion that actually managed to postpone (British) ‘civilization’ for almost a thousand years? Can we avoid taking sides? And if not, whose side are we on?¹⁹

School education in England has long set Celts (or ancient Britons), Boudica and Calgacus in opposition to the Romans, Julius Caesar and Agricola. It has also articulated a process of ‘Romanisation’ through which southern Britons are thought to have become civilised, leaving the ‘Celtic’ populations of the northern and western areas far behind. The concept of insistent dualities is characterised by opposing ideas about the past, many of which appear able to co-exist in society or even in the mind of a single individual.²⁰

Kristian Kristiansen has drawn upon a comparable idea of dualities in defining two European myths of origin that derive from a classical dichotomy drawn between ‘civilisation’ and ‘barbarism’.²¹ He argues that:

This dichotomy ... has produced two dominant European myths of origin: (i) The first emphasises the importance of cultural transmission from the so-called centres of ‘Civilisation’ in the origins of Europe, focusing on the barbarian destruction of Classical Rome and the subsequent revitalisation of ‘Classical Civilisation’ from the Renaissance onwards. (ii) In contrast, the second stresses the indigenous nature of

¹⁸ Beard and Henderson 1999, 47.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 46–7.

²⁰ Hingley and Unwin 2005, 214–221.

²¹ Kristiansen 1996, 138.

European origins and situates 'Barbarism' as the original source of uncorrupted freedom providing a vital alternative to the despotism of the classical empires.

The European myth of 'Civilisation' focuses on the revitalisation of classical culture from the Renaissance onwards, following its destruction across Western and Central Europe by the barbarian peoples who brought the Western Roman Empire to an end.²² These concepts are comparable to those defined by Alfredo Gonzáles-Ruibal when he describes two types of colonialist discourses current from the mid nineteenth to the mid twentieth centuries: 'the discourse of civilisation and the discourse of origins'.²³

The articulation of these dualities often seems to relate to the ways that we understand our places in the present; it derives potency from the inherent ambiguity of these concepts in classical writings that address Britain.²⁴ Ideas about the Iron Age and Roman pasts have long drawn upon the writings of classical authors, including the important works of Caesar, Tacitus and Cassius Dio.²⁵ The conceptions derived from these accounts have changed substantially as a result of research and also due to changes in how people conceive the world.²⁶ Gradually, a knowledge of the pre-Roman and Roman past has emerged that has distanced itself from the classical texts, although the descriptions included in these literary sources remain at the core of contemporary understanding.²⁷ Inherited dualities, therefore, still operate powerfully in British culture.

School teaching, television and museums are important in contemporary society as a direct consequence of the large audiences that engage with the past via these media. Television is a mass medium that facilitates public interactions with the past for not only quantitatively significant but also diverse groups of the population, with archaeological TV viewing found to be widespread regardless of the education qualifications attained by individual viewers.²⁸ Museums, together with other heritage venues in the UK, continue

²² Ibid.

²³ Gonzáles-Ruibal 2010, 39.

²⁴ Clarke 2001 has explored the ambiguity at the core of Tacitus' description of Britain in the *Agricola*. The ambiguities within classical texts describing the people of Britain have been developed since the Renaissance to explore the identity of Iron Age and Roman-period peoples.

²⁵ cf. Braund 1996.

²⁶ Smiles 1994; Morse 2005; Hingley 2008.

²⁷ Even if we aim to work beyond or to sideline classical writings, however, they remain an element in how we comprehend the past, since these ideas are so fundamental to our society, media and educational system (Webster 1999; Hingley 2011).

²⁸ Bonacchi 2014.

instead to attract primarily visitors with higher levels of formal education, but have still been regarded by some as ‘mass media of the long term’ because of the high numbers of people they allow reaching over time.²⁹

Television coverage of Iron Age and Roman Britain in the programmes ‘What the Romans did for Us’, ‘Meet the Ancestors’ and ‘Time Team’ and certain museum displays continue to suggest that the Roman invasion was a ‘good thing’ for those living to the south of Hadrian’s Wall.³⁰ In some cases they emphasise the idea that the Iron Age people of Britain were ‘barbarians’ who lacked any form of evolved civilisation.³¹ Similarly, the post-Roman period is often portrayed as a move to a ‘darker age’, another expression of Kristiansen’s myth of origin,³² which opposes civilised Romans to uncivilised barbarians.³³ Pete Wilson has suggested that the prominence of the Roman past on TV reflects the ‘tele-visual’ character of Roman sites and finds, and the fact that coverage of Roman Britain in the National Curriculum in England for schools Key Stage 2 makes this period familiar to the public.³⁴

Until recently, the teaching of history in the English schools commenced with the Roman invasion – a stark contrast with the (then) emphasis on Iron Age Celts in Welsh schools.³⁵ It included the ‘barbarian’ ancient Britons that were first mentioned in classical texts (including Caratacus and Boudica), but excluded the previous millennia of settled life in these islands. In 2010, the All-Party Parliamentary Archaeology Action Group led an important and successful initiative for prehistory to be included in the English National Curriculum, noting that ‘the UK is the only European State to neglect prehistory in this way’.³⁶ The new National Curriculum, introduced in 2013, includes the option of teaching the ‘Stone Age to the Iron Age’ at Key Stage 2, while Key Stage 3 includes optional topics

²⁹ Ibid.; Merriman 2004.

³⁰ Hingley and Unwin 2005, 3, 207–8; Hingley 2015b, 169–72; Pohl 2016, 230, 233–4, 236–7; [Rebecca Redfern pers. com.](#) The concept of the Roman conquest of Britain as a ‘good thing’ is derived from Sellar and Yeatman’s satirical writings in their children’s book, *1066 and All That* (Sellar and Yeatman 1930, 10–1; cf Hingley and Unwin 2007, 3, 207).

³¹ Hingley 2015b, 169–72.

³² Kristiansen, 1996, 138.

³³ Lucy and Herring 1999, 7.

³⁴ Wilson 2016, 52.

³⁵ Mytum 2004, 99.

³⁶ English Heritage 2010, 19.

on the Neolithic and Iron Age.³⁷ It is stated that pupils 'should' be taught about 'Changes in Britain from the Stone Age to the Iron Age', with cited examples:

- Late Neolithic hunter-gathers [sic] and early farmers, for example, Skara Brae
- Bronze Age religion, technology and travel, for example, Stonehenge
- Iron Age hill forts: tribal kingdoms, farming, art and culture.

For the 'Roman Empire and its impact on Britain', the examples are:

- Julius Caesar's attempted invasion in 55–54 BC
- The Roman Empire by AD 42 and the power of its army
- Successful invasion by Claudius and conquest, including Hadrian's Wall
- British resistance, for example, Boudica
- 'Romanisation' of Britain: sites such as Caerwent and the impact of technology, culture and belief, including early Christianity'.³⁸

This indicates that the main emphasis in the teaching of the ancient past in England remains on Roman history, highlighting invasion, resistance and Romanisation.

The BBC provide a website to support history teaching at Key Stage 2, which has information about the Roman Empire, including themes on:

- How the Romans conquered Britain
- What was life like in the Roman army?
- What was it like in Roman Britain?
- How did the Romans change Britain?³⁹

Aimed at a young audience, this includes themes on how the 'Celts' fought back against the Roman invaders, life as a Roman legionary, visiting a Roman town, looking around a

³⁷ Department for Education 2014, 247, 251.

³⁸ The post-Roman recommendations are not listed in this article.

³⁹ BBC 2017.

Roman villa, the nature of the technology that Romans brought to Britain and how the Romans left their mark on Britain.⁴⁰

Nigel Mills has observed that images and concepts derived from the teaching of the Roman past in schools may be perceived as boring and predictable today.⁴¹ The English educational system emphasises that knowledge of the Romans in Britain is well established and definitive, that we now know what we need to know and also that the Romans were rather like us; they lived in a relatively ordered and settled world with a strong military presence and clear class divisions. The Iron Age peoples seem, by contrast, rather 'other', having lived in tribal kingdoms, created hillforts and imaginative art and fought hard to halt the Roman conquest of southern Britain.⁴²

The critical assessment of concepts of 'Celtic' identities in archaeology has highlighted the problems of drawing direct comparisons between populations resident in Europe in the ancient past and the present.⁴³ Until recently, the National Curriculum in Wales had strongly emphasised the Celtic Iron Age and the Celtic origins of the Welsh.⁴⁴ The new Welsh National Curriculum for History, published in 2008, specifies that Stage 2 pupils should be given the opportunity to study either the 'Iron Age Celts or the Romans' alongside a range of other options.⁴⁵ It stresses that pupils should develop knowledge that is based in 'the local area within the wider context of Wales, but including examples from Britain and other countries.' This should help to dilute the earlier educational focus on the Celtic past, which did not necessarily project an inclusive image for Welsh society today.⁴⁶

⁴⁰ Certain museums have been heavily involved in supporting school teaching and have often attempted to avoid the dualities outlined in this paper, but often without success as it proves difficult to dissolve stereotypes (Rebecca Redfern pers. com.).

⁴¹ Mills 2013, 1–2.

⁴² Although it should be noted that some imaginative and well informed educational packages have been produced for both the Iron Age and Roman periods.

⁴³ e.g. James 1999; Collis 2003; Dietler 2006. A substantial proportion of archaeologists working in Scotland, however, continue to find the concept of a Celtic Iron Age of value (Ralston 2012).

⁴⁴ Mytum 1999, 199; Mytum 2004, 99; Rhys 2008, 243–6.

⁴⁵ Department for Children 2008, 12.

⁴⁶ cf. Rhys 2008, 244–6. It is also true that many of the people who seek to draw upon ideas of Celtic identity are making connections with the past without necessarily aiming to exclude others (cf. Harvey et al. 2002, 4).

Building on these media and educational concepts, we have outlined the insistent dualities shown in Table 1.⁴⁷ The core of this paper addresses how a number of these insistent dualities related to stability and movement appear to remain central to recent archaeological research and the media coverage and public re-use of this work.

Iron Age	Roman
Indigenous	Foreign
Barbaric	Civilised
Spiritual	Rational
Insular	Multicultural
Wild	Cultured
Ignorant	Educated
Instinctive	Controlled
Rural	Urban
Agrarian	Industrial/Militarised
Free	Enslaved
Traditional	Progressive
Dispersed	Centralised
Rooted	Mobile

Table 1: An introductory list of dualities for Iron Age and Roman Heritages⁴⁸

An ‘indigenous’ Iron Age

The idea of the indigenous Iron Age draws upon a European myth of origin stemming from the Renaissance that created a contrast between the inheritance of ‘civilisation’ from classical Greece and Rome and the ‘uncorrupted freedom’ of the indigenous ‘barbarians’ of Western Europe who came into contact with the expanding Roman Empire.⁴⁹ Classical authors gave tribal and personal names to these ‘barbarian’ peoples, providing a powerful source for ideas of identity since these were the first ancient peoples to be named by

⁴⁷ For earlier research see Hingley 2000, 147–9. These themes were discussed at [workshops in Durham in November 2016 and March 2017](#). They will be developed as a result of the project for which this paper is a pilot publication.

⁴⁸ [Of course some of these popular ideas are contradicted by archaeological information, for example the occurrence of slave shackles in Iron Age contexts.](#)

⁴⁹ Kristiansen 1996, 138; cf. Gonzáles-Ruibal 2010, 39.

accredited sources. From the sixteenth century, these communities were often drawn upon in contexts where contemporary societies felt culturally dominated or militarily threatened by powerful kingdoms, states or empires.⁵⁰ During the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, concepts of indigenous origins became caught up with debates and narratives that addressed national identity. Hobsbawm has argued that the idea of nations as a natural, or 'God-given', way of classifying people is a myth derived from modernity.⁵¹ Such conceptions have drawn upon ideas derived, for example, from the Celtic and Germanic identities of communities laying claim to historical roots; they continue to be of concern when adopted in an essentialist fashion.⁵²

It is unlikely that classical writers such as Julius Caesar and Tacitus had access to any detailed sources of information regarding the origins of the Iron Age peoples of Britain, but this did not prevent them speculating. Caesar had direct experience of Britain from his two invasion campaigns of the south-east during 55 and 54 BC. His observations (*B. Gall.* 5.12) on the origins of the ancient population of Britain have been highly influential:

The inland part of Britain is inhabited by inhabitants declared in their own tradition to be indigenous to the island, the maritime part by those that migrated at an earlier time from Belgium to seek booty and invasion. Nearly all of these latter are called after the names of the states from which they sprang when they went to Britain; and after the invasion they lived there and began to till the fields.⁵³

Tacitus (*Agricola* 11) provided vital information about the initial conquest of Britain during the period from AD 43 to the later first century. He also speculated about British origins, observing that it was not clear whether the first inhabitants of Britain were natives or immigrants and that:

The reddish hair and large limbs of the Caledonian proclaims a Germanic origin: the swarthy faces of the Silures, the tendency of the hair to curl and the fact that Spain lies opposite, all lead one to believe that Spaniards crossed in ancient times and occupied that part of the country. The people nearest to Gaul likewise resemble

⁵⁰ Geary 2002, 19; cf. Morse 2005, 11 for Celtic identity in Britain.

⁵¹ Hobsbawm (1990, 10); cf. Gibson et al. 2013, 3.

⁵² Dietler 2006; Wilson 2013.

⁵³ Text slightly modified from original translation by H.J. Edwards.

them. It may be that they still show the effects of a common origin; or perhaps it is climatic conditions that have produced this physical type in lands that converge so closely from north to south. On the whole, however, it seems likely that Gauls settled on the islands lying so close to their shores. In both countries you find the same ritual and religious beliefs. There is no great difference in their language ...

These accounts, although in no way reliable as ethnographic descriptions,⁵⁴ have formerly been taken to suggest that the peoples of Iron Age Britain had rather mixed cultural origins. Prior to the 1960s, Iron Age archaeologists explained many aspects of the archaeological record by referring to the invasions of new people from continental Europe, a model termed the 'invasion hypothesis'.⁵⁵ Since then, however, explanations have turned away from the concept of Iron Age invasions and migrations towards the idea that many of the peoples of Iron Age Britain may have been indigenous to the areas in which they lived. Barry Cunliffe, for example, has presented a balanced perspective:

There can be no doubt ... that the communities of the south and east of Britain were in frequent, if not constant, contact with the adjacent Continent. ... there may well have been a trickle of immigrants who would have merged imperceptibly with the native communities. On some occasions larger groups may have arrived, but unless they were numerous enough and determined enough to have maintained their alien identity over several generations they are unlikely now to be archaeologically visible, and their cultural contribution, like their genes, will have been absorbed into the indigenous pool.⁵⁶

This focus on indigenous Iron Age peoples is part of a far wider tradition in which archaeologists have become broadly resistant to the idea of large-scale migration in the prehistoric past, looking determinedly for 'indigenous' origins for peoples across the globe.⁵⁷

Recent research is once again, however, beginning to emphasise the scale of interaction between south-eastern Britain and the Continent during the Late Iron Age, and

⁵⁴ Woolf 2011, 90–1.

⁵⁵ Cunliffe 2005, 9, 83–4.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 83–4.

⁵⁷ van Dommelen 2014.

the increasing mobility of people.⁵⁸ Counter to this, developing scientific techniques may inadvertently be adding authority to the image of the 'indigenous' Iron Age. An article in the magazine *British Archaeology*, entitled 'The ancient British genome',⁵⁹ outlines recent attempts to define a characteristic genome for Iron Age British populations using aDNA studies of ancient skeletal remains.⁶⁰ Most significant studies of DNA have examined samples from living people, although it is becoming increasingly possible to extract aDNA from ancient human remains, constituting the beginning of a 'revolution' in the field of ancient human genetic history.⁶¹ Projects across England have published the genomes of twenty-three people, four from the Iron Age, eleven from the Roman period and eight from the Anglo-Saxon period. Mike Pitts has questioned the degree to which modern Britons are Anglo-Saxon, Roman or ancient British.⁶²

Two significant studies of ancient genomes have been published in *Nature Communications*.⁶³ Research by Schiffels et al. analysed ten aDNA samples from excavations in eastern England. These included three Iron Age samples from Cambridgeshire used as proxies for the 'indigenous British population'.⁶⁴ The authors note that the Iron Age samples 'preferentially merged at the base of the ancestral branch for all modern Northern European samples'.⁶⁵ The second study, by Martiniano et al., addressed nine ancient samples from a burial area at York, including six Roman-period individuals whose genomes showed similarities with a sample derived from a single Iron Age burial, a finding that the authors have taken to suggest population continuity.⁶⁶ These studies, which have generated interest on the Internet, emphasise the potential complexity of the genetics of the ancient population of Britain.⁶⁷ Recent scientific research on the DNA of

⁵⁸ e.g. Moore 2016.

⁵⁹ Pitts 2016, 14. See Schiffels 2016 for an introduction to genome analysis.

⁶⁰ Previous attempts to identify ancient population movements have involved the sampling of DNA from contemporary populations (e.g. Leslie et al. 2015, Figure 1). aDNA ('ancient DNA') analysis is characterised by the sampling of materials derived from contexts not intended for DNA use, such as bones from archaeological excavations (Redfern et al. in press).

⁶¹ Pitts 2016, 15.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Schiffels et al. 2016 and Martiniano et al. 2016.

⁶⁴ Schiffels et al. 2016, 3.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 5.

⁶⁶ Martiniano et al. 2016, 1.

⁶⁷ e.g. Schiffels et al. 2016, 1; Schiffels 2016, 16.

contemporary communities has also challenged the idea of a single Iron Age or Celtic genome across the UK by highlighting seventeen regionally distinct ‘genetic clusters’.⁶⁸ Although these studies of aDNA offer major opportunities to study the complexity of the population of Iron Age Britain, they also tend to simplify this potential complexity by using the term ‘indigenous’ to address Iron Age people and their descendants.⁶⁹

A burial from the outskirts of early Roman London offers a particularly interesting perspective on Iron Age mobilities and identities.⁷⁰ The ‘Harper Road woman’ was buried in a wooden coffin, well beyond the south boundary of the early city of Londinium on higher ground **in Southwark**, was found in an extended position and accompanied by an array of grave goods, some interpreted by archaeologists as ‘indigenous’ and others as ‘Roman’.⁷¹ These included a mirror, a toilet set, a neck-ring, a flagon, two samian dishes and pig bones. The flagon and samian vessels suggest that the burial may date to before AD 65.⁷² The neck-ring resembles a number of arm rings and torcs from Hertfordshire and East Anglia, while the two-piece toilet set has an Iron Age pedigree.⁷³ The aDNA analysis indicates that this person had brown eyes and dark hair and, although the style of burial and the skeletal anatomy was indicative of a female, the chromosomes were male (XY).⁷⁴ Stable isotope analysis has suggested that she was probably born in Britain, although **a maternal ancestor** may have traveled from eastern Europe or further afield.⁷⁵ It is likely that this woman came from a family resident in Britain at the conquest of AD 43 who buried her on the periphery of the early city,⁷⁶ an indigenous response to the rapid changes

⁶⁸ Leslie et al. 2015. This study has also argued that European groups feature substantially in the ancestry profiles of all the UK clusters (ibid., 311). See Ghosh 2015 for the BBC News coverage of this research.

⁶⁹ e.g. Schiffels et al. 2016, 2, 3 4, 7; Martiniano et al. 2016, 6. It is instructive to see that some accounts of individuals that may have remained in the vicinity of their places of birth during the Roman period tend to avoid the use the term ‘indigenous’, referring rather to the concept of ‘local’ individuals (cf. Eckardt et al. 2014; Eckardt and Müldner 2016). The concept of being local is, of course, not without its own difficulties (see below).

⁷⁰ Redfern et al. in press. We very grateful to Rebeca Redfern for information in advance of publication.

⁷¹ Cotton 2008; Wallace 2014: 62.

⁷² Cotton 2008: 156, 158–9.

⁷³ Redfern et al in press.

⁷⁴ The evidence of aDNA has indicated that this individual had ‘a sex development disorder’ (ibid.).

⁷⁵ **Rebecca Redfern pers. com.**

⁷⁶ Ibid.

occurring in south-eastern Britain.⁷⁷ **The remarkable burial deposit at Cliffs End Farm (Kent) also indicates the presence of people from Scandinavia and the Western Mediterranean at this site during the Bronze Age and Iron Age.⁷⁸**

The concept of indigenous origins is also reflected in archaeological ideas about the ancient Iron Age environment. With the ‘ecological turn’ of the 1970s the idea of an egalitarian and sustainable Iron Age started to gain popularity.⁷⁹ A tradition of (re)construction and experimental archaeology, commencing with Peter Reynold’s work at Butser Ancient Farm,⁸⁰ has focused on creating reliable (re)constructions of Iron Age roundhouses and agricultural features. Part of this research has aimed to re-establish crops and animals appropriate for the agricultural economy of settled Iron Age communities using information from bones and crop remains found on excavations of the same period.⁸¹ For some, Iron Age life has become emblematic of an egalitarian, peaceful, sustainable, possibly ‘Celtic’ and (potentially) spiritual past.⁸² This has arisen not only as a result of the development of archaeological (re)construction at open-air museums but also through the actions of the participants in the early ‘reality TV’ programme, ‘Living in the Past’ (1977).⁸³ Robert Witcher has reviewed a narrative in ecological studies, arguing that the Iron Age is usually seen as a time when Britain was dominated by ‘native’ species, forming a direct contrast to the supposedly large-scale importation of new (or ‘alien’) species by the Romans.⁸⁴ Witcher has observed that some consider the Iron Age environment ‘dull and in need of enrichment’,⁸⁵ despite the fact that the archaeological

⁷⁷ Cotton 2008; Redfern et al. in press.

⁷⁸ **Wessex Archaeology (2017)**

⁷⁹ See Engels 2010, 120–8 for this ‘ecological turn’.

⁸⁰ Reynolds 1979.

⁸¹ Ibid., 47–69.

⁸² cf. Mytum 2003, 96–7; cf Rhys 2008.

⁸³ Hingley forthcoming. This is a problematic idea, since agricultural erosion of soils certainly occurred during the Iron Age across southern Britain and the idea of this period as a egalitarian and sustainable society appears at least in part to form another insistent duality with the emphasis on urbanism, mobility and connectivity for the Roman past.

⁸⁴ Witcher 2013, 6.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

record is too fragmentary to be sure that some ‘alien’ species were not already present prior to the Roman invasion.⁸⁶

Attempts to define an Iron Age genome (or Iron Age genomes), as described above, could reinforce the efforts of some self-defined groups in Britain to claim territory and resources, and to marginalise the rights of people they have defined as ‘other’?⁸⁷ A number of archaeologists now believe that identities during the British Iron Age were highly localised, fragmentary and unstable.⁸⁸ It is likely that the genes of the Iron Age population of southern Britain were transformed by the regular movement of people into certain areas of Britain.⁸⁹ The extent to which new species of animals and plants may have been imported to the British Isles prior to the Roman conquest is also a relevant field for further research,⁹⁰ as is the degree to which Iron Age agriculture can, in any realistic way, be considered sustainable.⁹¹ The romanticised ideas about the prehistoric past derive from the dualities that have been used to define the Iron Age and Roman pasts.

Roman mobility: migration and ‘local’ peoples

Archaeological approaches to the population of Britain during the Roman period are changing. The previous emphasis on the Romanisation of the ancient Britons has been challenged over the past twenty-five years by a body of archaeological research that presents a range of alternative approaches.⁹² One important innovation has been research into mobilities, diaspora and population movement.⁹³ The control and administration of the extensive lands incorporated into the Roman Empire depended on large-scale migration that included significant numbers of soldiers, imperial officials and traders;⁹⁴ people

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 19. Evidence exists to support the idea, for example, that animals were moved long distances prior to the Roman invasion (Albarella et al. 2008; Bendrey et al. 2009).

⁸⁷ cf. Holtorf 2009. A study of the genetic structure of the British population argues, however, that there is no evidence of a general ‘Celtic’ population in the northern and western areas of the UK, but rather a number of distinct clusters across these regions (Leslie et al. 2015, 314).

⁸⁸ Moore 2011.

⁸⁹ cf. Schiffels et al. 2016, 3.

⁹⁰ van der Veen et al. 2008, 11; Witcher 2013.

⁹¹ cf. Allen and Scaife 2007; Hingley forthcoming.

⁹² Gardner 2013, 3–6. Although this often seems not to have played a significant role in the ways Britannia is communicated by television and in schools (Hingley 2015b, 167–72).

⁹³ Eckardt ed. 2010; Eckardt et al. 2014; Eckardt and Müldner 2016.

⁹⁴ Eckardt et al. 2014, 534. The papers in de Ligt and Tacoma eds. 2016 have explored migration in the early Roman Empire from a variety of perspectives.

travelled long distances. An ambitious programme of scientific analysis of human remains has focused on tracing the areas from which people living in Britannia originated, aiming to assess the degree of migration and also the presence of 'local' people in the burial record through cranial, stable isotope and aDNA analyses.⁹⁵ Results from a project that examined a group of late Roman burials from the cemetery at Lankhills, Winchester (Hampshire) suggested that some of the individual burials were 'exotic', or a 'putatively immigrant population'.⁹⁶ The 'Roman Diaspora' project analysed skeletons from cemeteries at York, Catterick, Gloucester and Winchester (Lankhills) in order to explore the presence of migrants from across the Roman world.⁹⁷ Additional research has sampled twenty individuals from contexts across Roman London, identifying those who may have derived from areas 'local' to Londinium as well as a number who may have migrated from the Mediterranean.⁹⁸ Examination of twenty-two skeletons from the Lant Street cemetery in Southwark (the southern burial area of Roman London) has suggested that there was sustained migration into the city from areas of the Mediterranean including North Africa and the Middle East.⁹⁹ Work has also been undertaken on the eDNA of Roman individuals from York.¹⁰⁰

The combined results of these studies suggest that some of the urban centres of Roman Britain received migrants from across the Roman Empire throughout the Roman period.¹⁰¹ Evidence reveals a range of burial practices, both for individuals who derived from locations across the Roman world, these include people who appear, from stable isotopic analysis and assessment of their burials, to have been 'local'.¹⁰² Eckardt et al.

⁹⁵ See Eckardt et al. 2014, 535 and Redfern et al. 2016 for a recent discussion of cranial analysis and stable isotope analysis (oxygen, strontium, lead, carbon and nitrogen) of human dental tissue. The potential and limitations of these complex and problematic methods of analysis are not considered further in this article. Prowse (2016, 208–211) has reviewed this research.

⁹⁶ Evans et al., 2006, 265.

⁹⁷ Chenery et al. 2010; Eckardt et al. 2014; Eckardt and Müldner 2016; Eckardt et al. 2015; Leach et al. 2010; University of Reading 2017.

⁹⁸ [Shaw et al. 2016](#).

⁹⁹ [Redfern et al. 2016](#).

¹⁰⁰ Martiniano et al. 2016.

¹⁰¹ Eckardt et al. 2014.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 539–40. Isotope analysis reflects the diet and the climatic and geological setting of an individual's residence in early life. Those identified as 'local' may therefore have been descended from one or more parents or ancestors who had been migrants. Studies have explored the mobility of individuals in relation to their age, gender, status and diet (*ibid.*, 541–4).

have discussed the meaning of the concept of being 'local', which might relate to origins from the particular place at which the individual was buried or, alternatively, to an origin within Britain.¹⁰³ These studies also challenge any simple categorisation of immigrant groups in terms of burial practices and the artefacts that accompanied them into the afterlife.¹⁰⁴

A counter to this image of substantial population movement is provided by stable isotope analysis of **human** bone from burials at the Roman small town and military centre at Catterick (North Yorkshire), which appear to show a markedly less diverse population than is indicated for larger towns.¹⁰⁵ In addition, stable isotope studies from the cemeteries have identified individuals who may have been 'local' and it is argued that the genomes of six skeletons from a Roman-period cemetery in York show affinities with the 'Iron Age genome' derived from an earlier burial from a cemetery at Melton in East Yorkshire, suggesting population continuity from Iron Age to Roman times.¹⁰⁶

The majority of scientific analysis of geographical origins has been undertaken on human remains from the Roman cities and towns at York, Winchester, Gloucester and London, among the most likely destinations for migration to Britain in Roman times. London was the primary port, market and administrative centre of Britannia, York included a legionary fortress and a Roman colony and Gloucester was also a colony. Britannia was, however, primarily a rural society, with perhaps around 90% of the population living in the countryside and small towns,¹⁰⁷ yet relatively little research has been undertaken on burials from such sites. In addition, stable isotopic investigations have, to date, often

¹⁰³ Ibid. Eckardt et al. have also noted that individuals who appear to have been 'local' may have derived from more distant areas with stable isotopic signatures similar to the areas in which they were buried. Prowse (2016, 213–9) has outlined other limitations with stable isotope studies of migration.

¹⁰⁴ Eckardt et al. 2014; Shaw et al. 2016, 65.

¹⁰⁵ Chenery et al. 2011. **Although the neighbouring late Roman cemetery at Scorton produced evidence for people of non-British origin (Eckardt et al. 2015).**

¹⁰⁶ Martiniano et al. 2016, 1.

¹⁰⁷ Hingley and Miles 2002, 154. The nature of the available materials is also influencing what can be achieved through scientific analysis. Many Roman inhumation cemeteries are late Roman in date, reflecting a tendency for early Roman burials to have been cremations. Many of the inhumation cemeteries are also urban in context, representing the types of places in which migrants may most often have lived (Weekes 2016). Inhumation burials are less commonly found for much of the Iron Age in Britain, **when the dead appear to have been treated in a variety of ways that have led to the discovery of fragments of bone rather than whole bodies (Both and Madgwick 2016).**

focused on Roman burials with unusual grave goods instead of exploring a diverse range of burials with different attributes, again biasing the results obtained.¹⁰⁸

The data currently available does not, therefore, provide an entirely reliable representation of the degree of migration into Roman Britain. Eckardt et al. have emphasised the need to undertake stable isotope analysis of burials that better reflect the whole Roman population of Britain, including 'low-status graves' and those associated with rural communities.¹⁰⁹ The project undertaken by Shaw et al. deliberately searched for diversity in Roman burials across London, in order to create a more representative picture of the human population, at least for Londinium.¹¹⁰ It is interesting to note that far fewer studies have undertaken stable isotopic research on skeletal remains from parts of the Roman world other than Britannia.¹¹¹ There has also been little research to address those peoples emigrating from Britannia to other parts of the Roman Empire.¹¹²

The character of Britain as a territory that was only partly conquered by Rome provides the opportunity to address population mobility beyond the borders. Studies of artefacts derived from the Empire but found in contexts beyond the imperial frontiers have long been used to argue for the increased mobility of human populations across these border areas during the period of Roman control.¹¹³ The acidic soils across much of the northern and western British Isles tend to mitigate against the preservation of human skeletal remains, but stable isotope analysis of a number of unusual inhumation burials with distinctive artefacts from Ireland has been used to argue that the individuals studied originated from outside the island.¹¹⁴

In addition to ideas of the large-scale movement of people into the Roman province of Britannia, there has been a considerable interest in the importation of alien (or exotic)

¹⁰⁸ Eckardt et al. 2014, 541.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 536–7, 541.

¹¹⁰ Shaw et al. 2016, 59.

¹¹¹ Prowse (2016, 208, 211). Relevant research that has assessed mobility of populations in other areas of the Roman Empire includes articles by Gowland and Garnsey 2010; Kilgrove 2010; Prowse et al. 2010; Schweissing and Grupe 2013. For a recent review of stable isotopes and mobility in the Roman Empire, see Prowse 2016.

¹¹² Although inscriptions, military diplomas and other artefacts indicate such movements (Ivleva 2016).

¹¹³ Hunter 2013; Cahill Wilson 2014; Cahill Wilson et al. 2014.

¹¹⁴ Cahill Wilson et al. 2014. Analysing any available inhumations from areas of northern Britain and Ireland which remained outside the Roman Empire should form key issues for future research.

fauna and flora by the Romans,¹¹⁵ with the suggestion that the Roman invasion created a new cultural and ecological context across Britain south of Hadrian's Wall.¹¹⁶ van der Veen et al. observe that 'The new foods brought a significant diversification of the plant components of the diet, as well as introducing new sources of essential nutrients.'¹¹⁷ Emphasis on evidence in the archaeological record for the introduction of urbanism and large-scale industry during the Roman period is also used to create parallels with the modern age,¹¹⁸ with a positive perspective on the impact of Rome.

A number of studies have been undertaken in England to assess the potential value of Roman migration in the context of the diverse communities that characterise contemporary Britain.¹¹⁹ Results from the 'Roman Diaspora' project were used as part of a campaign to lobby for the inclusion of the history of migration in Britain into the new English National Curriculum during 2013.¹²⁰ A printed teaching resource derived from the 'Roman Diaspora' project, accompanied by a website, 'Romans Revealed', is now available for children aged 7 to 11;¹²¹ this explores the character of the evidence from 'Roman Britain, archaeology and diversity'.¹²² The information for migration into Roman Britain has been promoted extensively through digital media and museum displays in York, London and on Hadrian's Wall.¹²³ In Autumn 2016, the first episode of the BBC television series 'Black and British' highlighted the movement of people from the south and east of the Mediterranean into Britain in the Roman period.¹²⁴

¹¹⁵ cf. van der Veen et al. 2008.

¹¹⁶ Witcher 2013.

¹¹⁷ van der Veen et al. 2008, 12.

¹¹⁸ See Grew 2001 and Pohl 2016 for the Roman display at the Museum of London.

¹¹⁹ Kaur 2011; Tolia-Kelly 2011; Eckardt and Müldner 2016, 215–6; Nesbitt 2016.

¹²⁰ Runnymede Trust 2013. See Historical Association 2013 for the inclusion of world history into the final version of the National Curriculum.

¹²¹ Runnymede Trust no date; University of Reading / Runnymede Trust 2017.

¹²² Runnymede Trust no date, 5. The website presents the stories of four individual Roman Britons, telling stories derived from the study of individual skeletons that address issues of migration and assimilation.

¹²³ Tolia-Kelly 2011; Eckardt and Müldner 2016, 216; University of Reading / Runnymede Trust 2017.

¹²⁴ BBC 2016.

Sensing the public on issues of bordering and mobility

So far, this article has focused on the degree to which the past and the present are not entirely separate entities and the importance of seeking to understand how archaeological research has exploited this interrelationship.¹²⁵ In this section, we will show how ‘insistent dualities’ emerge in current discourse around present-day mobility and borders, and will reflect on the processes via which some of the knowledge presented in previous sections is utilised by different stakeholders. In so doing, we ask to what extent an ‘educational’ approach to public archaeology is suitable or viable, and whether it should be substituted by a ‘pluralist’ position that more fully accepts and embraces the multivalency of the past today.¹²⁶

On 23 June 2016, British citizens were called to decide upon Britain’s possible withdrawal as a member of the European Union. The event was preceded and followed by substantial public discussion, which has been populating, amongst other media and platforms, 158 public Facebook pages specifically dedicated to ‘Brexit’.¹²⁷ Some of the comments posted to these pages include references to Roman, pre- and post-Roman pasts.¹²⁸ Whilst such mentions are not frequent, they were ‘spontaneously’ offered and thus have potent utility in our attempts to understand how the periods examined are leveraged in the context of heated debates around contemporary identities and politics.

Comments that do invoke past periods in relation to Brexit refer mainly to the idea of a Roman Empire, whereas previous and subsequent times are more or less explicitly drawn upon in order to underline differences and contrasts. This is not surprising, since, after all, the European Union takes deep inspiration from imperial Rome to inform its policies for integration and the dissolution of borders,¹²⁹ and the entanglements of concepts of Britishness, Englishness, Brexit and imperial structures (the Roman Empire and the British Empire, particularly) have been the subject of recent scrutiny.¹³⁰ A first

¹²⁵ Hingley 2015a.

¹²⁶ See, for example, Matsuda’s latest contribution to the debate on Public Archaeology theory, focussing especially on models to conceptualise archaeologists’ kinds of engagement with the public: educational, public relations, pluralist and critical (Matsuda 2016). This debate develops previous work by Holtorf (2007, 105–129) and Merriman (2004, 5–6).

¹²⁷ These are all the public Facebook pages containing the word ‘Brexit’ in their title as of January 2017 and whose comments could be extracted, for subsequent search and analysis.

¹²⁸ Individual Facebook pages were searched using the keywords or tokens: ‘Roman’, ‘Iron Age’, ‘Celt’, ‘Saxon’, ‘Medieval’.

¹²⁹ Hingley in press.

¹³⁰ Gardner 2017.

parallel that is evidenced in support of so-called 'leave' positions regards the (perceived) despotic nature of the imperial ruling that Britain is facing now, which is described as comparable to the one that characterised 'the days of the Roman Empire' (direct quotation from the first of the two comments reported below). The following excerpts document this stance and how it is opposed to ideas of democratic freedom that are instead seen as underlying the structures of nation states.

In the current debate we have not heard very much about the concept and reality of the 'nation state'. It is true that the United Kingdom is an unusual nation state in that it is comprised of different nations, but we do have a UK parliament, the composition of which changes after every general election. Our parliament and only parliament, has executive powers. We currently live in a supranational entity, that is the current European Union. It is not even a proper federation, but headed by 'The Council of the European Union' and the 'Commission of the European Union' both of which bodies have executive functions and whose members cannot be voted in our our by anyone in the UK. **The last time that Britain faced imperial rule was in the days of the Roman Empire. Vote to Leave the EU on the 23rd June to get back our hard won democratic freedoms** [emphasis by the authors].¹³¹

BREXIT why? Simple:

Sovereignty - every nation state needs to have a constitution... and last I checked the European Constitution is yet to be ratified by all states and yet **Britain is being bullied to join this "roman empire" with no constitution in place yet?** Blimey have you gone bonkers? Exit is the only solution [...]¹³²

If the lack of shared legislation and constitutional principles can be considered a reason to de-legitimise the European Union, establishing a parallel with imperial Rome, a consequence of EU's (felt) 'despotism' and a further motivation to reject the EU project is the fact that the latter is perceived to override cultural specificities. Here as well, a direct comparison is made with the Roman Empire, seen as imposing (in the authors' words) a homogenising globalisation that 'smashes together' local traits:

¹³¹ Comment from the Facebook page *Albion - the historical case for Brexit*.

¹³² Comment from the Facebook page *The Brexit Bible*.

Some things you can run centrally but you can not centralise the vast cultural and regional differences, you cannot even begin to understand centrally the local issues so if anything we should see more devolution from the centre not more> **If you want to have a truly centralised state than you have to smash together cultures and override any regional variations, which, is what we tried to do a few hundred Years ago with the British Empire, what the Roman's tried to do, what the USSR tried to do and many other "super" states over the centuries.** This is your last chance to vote on the EU, the next time, maybe not in your life time but most certainly in your children's they will be part of such civil and political unrest as the EU collapses that it will put Europe back 100 Years.

This reference directly indicates the lack of impact of the research that has aimed to communicate the multivalency of the Roman past across Britain.

A second pro-leave point that surfaces from our initial qualitative scoping concerns mobility and migrations, with policies of integration identified as a reason for the 'fall' of the Roman Empire and the possible 'fall' of Britain in future.

'Nothing last forever but be careful what you wish for'

The Romans allowed other nationals to integrate and they fell.

[...] PLEASE BE WISE AND VOTE OUT¹³³

The passage above contains a distant and over-simplified echo of the debate relating to the end of the Roman Empire. Academic positions on this matter have changed substantially in recent years and are from being settled, with still heartily-felt reactions to, for example, Ward-Perkins' *The Fall of Rome*.¹³⁴ This volume strongly re-affirms, amongst other things, the violent nature of people's movements across the empire in the 4th and 5th centuries and refuses the idea of peaceful processes of 'acculturation' and 'accommodation' whose theoretical roots can be found especially in 1970s historiography.¹³⁵ Responses to this stance have spanned from acceptance to rejection, but there is today an overall tendency to agree on the multifaceted nature—cultural,

¹³³ Comment from the Facebook page *Brexit*.

¹³⁴ Ward-Perkins 2005.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 7–10.

economic, military—of the causes leading to the passage from the Roman to the post-Roman period across Europe and the Mediterranean.

Arguments in favour of continued EU membership revolve, instead, around the supposed ‘civilising power’ of the Roman Empire, showing a contrast between some public perceptions and recent academic critique to the concept of ‘Romanisation’. In invoking this theme, a Facebook user stressed that ‘without the Roman empire, you [the author is not of British origin] would be still barbarians living in huts’;¹³⁶ the latter comment fully discloses the covert counter-part of the idea of civilised Romans bringing progress, that of a generic ‘barbaric’ and pre-Roman population. A second commentator even referred to the TV programme ‘What have the Roman ever done for us?’,¹³⁷ signalling the agenda-setting role of television and the importance to collaborate with it or propose alternative narratives through more direct forms of audio-visual communication.¹³⁸

In concluding, with the initial sensing of public opinions reported in this section, we did not intend to offer a comprehensive study of current uses of Iron Age and Roman pasts in relation to Brexit.¹³⁹ We hope instead to have **shown** how the insistence of dualities within and beyond (and partly as a result of) ‘institutional’ media presentations (e.g. via television) and formal education, proves to be **a framework** to understand the de-construction and re-construction of ancient pasts for contemporary purposes and discourses. We also hope to have demonstrated that we see as ‘positive’ (e.g. a revision of Roman Britain to emphasise migration and multiculturalism) might be used to support very different ideological positions (here the pro-leave camp, for example).

Summary

To emphasise the dualistic thought behind the contrasting ideas of indigenous ancient Britons and Roman-period migrants is not to dismiss the serious research that lies behind contemporary understanding or the important results that have already accrued. Without experimentation and conjecture, archaeological materials have little potential to create imaginative interpretations that catch the attention. Recent scientific projects have

¹³⁶ Comment from the Facebook page *The Brexit Bible*.

¹³⁷ “‘What have the Roman's ever done for us?’ Was the style in which Patrick Stewart's EU REMAIN video went viral. [<http://gbrexit.com/brexit/human-rights-in-britain/>]. The video is in the link, along with a very strong counter argument!’. Comment from the Facebook page *GBrexit*.

¹³⁸ Bonacchi 2013; Bonacchi 2017.

¹³⁹ This will be the subject of a standalone future research article.

generated results that are helping to challenge scholarly accounts of Roman Britain and are clearly of interest to the broader public.¹⁴⁰

Future work on aDNA may further complicate assumptions about ‘indigenous’ Iron Age populations. The focus on migration into Britain in the Roman period is also based on conjecture given that the amount of available material from aDNA and stable isotope analysis remains limited and biased toward significant urban sites like to have more migrants than rural areas. Yet new ideas about mobility have a potentially important role in persuading people that the perspective outlined by the English National Curriculum for schools oversimplifies the degree to which indigenous ancient Britons became ‘civilised’ through a simple linear process of Romanisation. A more balanced conception of the diverse character of the people of Roman Britain will provide an increasingly informed understanding—including information about slaves, agricultural peasants, industry, gender and identity—which will move us beyond the territory of dualistic thought.¹⁴¹

Additional work is also required to address how archaeological evidence relates to the identities and roles of people today.¹⁴² Research for this paper suggests that such studies will need to navigate around the issue of insistent dualities, while working towards a deeper comprehension of the ways in which they are linked to each other and the overarching thematic webs that they make up. Crucially, we will also need to understand and take into account the extent to which these webs form along at least three main spectra that relate to the ways in which people engage with the past and which move, respectively, from fiction to factual, from engagement with present-day issues to escapism, from the shaping of personal identities to the construction of collective ones.

Many of these entrenched dualities are too powerful simply to replace and, indeed, academic research in our supposedly ‘post-colonial’ age often continues to reproduce them, even whilst challenging them. Building upon the idea of ambiguity inherent in these concepts could help to develop their potential as educational tools. It is important to persist in questioning how useful some of the insistent **dualities** identified in this paper may be in the development of accounts of the ancient past and also to consider how dualistic thinking can help to communicate the complexity of both the past and the present.

¹⁴⁰ As the large number of webpages that reflect on the results of the project by Shaw et al. demonstrate.

¹⁴¹ cf. individual chapters in Millett et al. eds 2016.

¹⁴² cf. Garraffoni and Funari 2012; Hingley 2015b.

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